CANADIAN DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Branch of the Commissioner of Agriculture and Dairying

EXTENSION OF MARKETS DIVISION

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BULLETIN No. 20

(New Series)

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Published by direction of the Honourable Sydney A. Fisher, Minister of Agriculture Ottawa.

OTTAWA
GOVERNMENT PRINTING BUREAU
SEPTEMBER, 1904

THE CANADIAN POULTRY TRADE WITH GREAT BRITAIN.

(*From* A. W. GRINDLEY, *Agent at Liverpool for the Canadian Department of Agriculture.*)

The Canadian poultry trade with Great Britain is in bad repute. With the exception of chickens from the government poultry fattening stations, and poultry shipped by a very few people who have followed instructions issued by the Canadian Department of Agriculture (which have been most favourably received in Great Britain), Canada has made little if any advance as regards the quality of the poultry shipped during the past five years.

While Canada has been marking time other countries, which export poultry to Great Britain, have been advancing rapidly, both as regards the quality of the birds and the style of packing.

There is no class of produce exported from Canada which deteriorates so quickly in quality and value as poultry, the trouble being due to one or more weak links in the long chain reaching from the Canadian producer to the British consumer. It is the Canadian exporters, however, who are chiefly to blame for the poor position taken by Canadian poultry, (more especially turkeys), in the British markets.

The poultry business is conducted under the following branches, one or more of which may be under the control of the Canadian exporter:—

(1). Rearing poultry.
(2). Fattening.
(3). Killing and packing.
(4). Shipping.
(5). Marketing.

REARING AND FATTENING.

Full practical information covering these branches is issued by the Canadian Department of Agriculture, from time to time, in bulletin form.

Copies of these bulletins, in English and in French, may be obtained free upon application to the Commissioner of Agriculture and Dairying, Department of Agriculture, Ottawa.

KILLING.

1. All poultry should be starved thirty-six hours before killing, so as to prevent any food being left in the crop and intestines to decompose and spoil the flavour of the meat. This is a point that is very often neglected, with the result that when the birds are landed in Great Britain they are full of sour food, or, as I have seen them, full of maggots.

2. Kill by dislocating the neck and bleed only by cutting in the mouth; the British importer does not want birds that have their heads chopped off, or are made unsightly in any way. The best class of trade demand bled poultry, as this method improves the colour of the flesh; the practice of killing by dislocating the neck and leaving the blood therein is not advisable, as it injures the appearance as well as the keeping quality of the bird.

3. All poultry should be dry plucked, and the cleaner plucked the better.

PACKING.

1. Medium sized birds, well set up and fleshy, but young, always sell well, and there is a limited demand for large, heavy birds; but there is always a glut of undersized, crooked or short breasted, scraggy-looking birds. It is good policy, therefore, to ship choice birds only, keeping the poorer grades for home markets and canning factories.

2. All poultry should be graded, that is birds of the same weight should be packed together.

3. All poultry should be thoroughly cooled before being packed, and while being cooled should be hung, or placed on wire-netted shelves, for, if placed on a floor or solid shelf the heat will settle in the part not exposed, which will become discoloured, if not putrid.

Care must also be taken not to cool too quickly; if warm poultry are placed in a refrigerator at a low temperature (below 28 degrees) they become quickly chilled and frozen on the outside, the remaining heat cannot escape and is finally driven into the bones, which become dark coloured, and as soon as the birds are thawed out they become putrid next the bone. Nearly always when poultry are discharged at British ports in a damaged, or partially damaged condition, the exporters ascribe the blame to poor transportation facilities, while, as a matter of fact, the damage has often been done before the poultry left the exporters' hands. Too much attention, therefore, cannot be paid to the proper cooling of poultry before they are packed.

SHIPPING.

1. Ship regular supplies of poultry over as long a period as possible; it is a mistake to ship heavily for the Christmas markets, as there is nearly always a glut at that season.

2. For the Christmas trade only a limited number of very choice turkeys should be shipped in full feather. A few years back a choice 'Canadian' turkey in full feather made a most enjoyable Christmas present, but for the past two seasons instead of Canadian turkeys we find the same people giving a barrel of Canadian apples, the latter being now honestly packed under the 'Fruit Marks Act.' This makes a much more acceptable present than a turkey, which, when the feathers are removed, is found to be badly shaped, badly fed, more or less bruised, and with a crop full of sour or putrid food.

Poultry should be frozen hard before being shipped. Of course the ideal method is 'chilling,' which means a uniform temperature of about 28 degrees, but, under present conditions of transportation, that uniform temperature cannot be maintained throughout; while we have a very good system of refrigeration in Canada and across the ocean, the damage is sustained after poultry are landed in Great Britain, where the shipment may be exposed to a high temperature for several days while being taken in railway cars from seaport to destination. It is during this period that the damage is done to chilled poultry which, if frozen hard, would have been placed in cold storage again before being injured.

Shipments from the United States and Russia are frozen hard and give general satisfaction provided the poultry are properly defrosted, which means taking about 3 or 4 days to gradually thaw the birds.

MARKETING.

Many Canadian exporters ship produce not only to towns in the same district, but to different firms in the same town, with the result that the buyers play one against

the other and very often get the goods at much less than their real value, the loss having to be sustained by the Canadian exporter.

Large American concerns, which have made a close study of exporting food products to Great Britain, choose reliable firms to handle their produce giving each a district in which they have the sole agency, these districts being of such size that they do not compete against each other. This policy appears to give general satisfaction.

The mistake is still made of consigning poultry, especially turkeys at Christmas time, to firms that are not in the poultry trade, who either turn the consignment over to a poultry dealer to sell and deduct two commissions from the returns, or else have the birds sold at public auction, often at a sacrifice in price. The better plan is to ship to a poultry dealer who controls cold storage, the shipment can then be held back in the event of glutted markets, and, in case of warm weather, forced sales would not be necessary.

In order to show the demand there is in Great Britain for poultry, I may mention that the value of poultry and game imported into the United Kingdom for the year ending December 31, 1903, amounted to a total of $5,846,997.96, while the value of poultry exported from Canada to Great Britain for the year ending June 30, 1903, amounted to a total of only $132,999, the chief supplies last year being imported from Russia, Belgium and France.

A. W. GRINDLEY.

LIVERPOOL, August 30, 1904.

CANADIAN BUTTER AND BACON IN THE GLASGOW MARKET

(From JOHN BROWN, *Inspector at Glasgow for the Canadian Department of Agriculture.)*

BUTTER.

Condition and quality.—All the shipments from Montreal to Glasgow this season have been landed in excellent condition, taking them as a whole. The quality of the butter has also been good, some parcels of extra fancy quality surpassing even last year's productions and giving the utmost satisfaction. Nearly all the shipments have been carried at a temperature of from 20° to 25° in the steamers' refrigerators.

Mould on butter.—I have only come across one instance of mould this season which I reported to the department; the trouble seemed to be caused through some defect in the paper. It is a mistake to use anything but the best paper obtainable, as paper of inferior quality is almost certain to cause trouble of some kind. It is also important that creamery men should keep their paper in a clean, dry place, otherwise it is liable to get infected with spores which, in many cases, have been found to be the direct cause of mould and spots appearing on the butter.

Packing and sacking.—The favourite package for creamery butter is undoubtedly the 56-lb. box. These generally have arrived in good condition, although some are a little too light for the weight they have to carry. We have also had several shipments of 70-lb. tubs, chiefly for the north. There is a limited demand for these, but it is not advisable to ship tubs of any smaller size. There has of late been an increasing number of Danish kiels shipped; some of the butter in these is of very fancy quality, and I have good reason to believe it is sometimes sold by the retailer as Danish butter. With regard to the question of sacks, I most certainly advocate the necessity of putting sacks on every package shipped from Canada, as they protect the packages to a great extent from breakage besides keeping them clean. I have carefully noted the difference between bare and sacked packages arriving here, and have invariably found that those which were covered were landed in better condition in every way than those which were bare. This season, as far as it has gone, the larger proportion of the packages received at this port have been sacked, which shows a marked improvement, in this direction, compared with previous years.

BACON.

The demand for Canadian bacon has been steadily increasing, and imports to Glasgow for the past six months show a large increase in the number of boxes shipped, compared with the corresponding period last year.

One of the largest importers here of American and Canadian meats strongly advocates the desirability of bringing over hams and bacon in cold storage during hot weather at a temperature of 35° to 40°, the idea being not to freeze the meats but to keep them thoroughly cool. This firm has brought over several hundred boxes weekly

in this way during the past summer, with marked success. The freight of course is higher, being 10s. a ton more than the ordinary rates, but the fresh condition of the goods well repays the extra charge. Would it not be of considerable benefit to Canadian shippers, whose meats are all mild-cured, to send over some of their goods in this manner during the hot season?

JOHN BROWN.

GLASGOW, September 1, 1904.